

# **WATCHUNG ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSION MINUTES(Final Copy #3)**

**October 23, 2017**

**Present:** Karen Pennett, SONDY Epstein, Rachel Funcheon, Don Pote, Joan Tak, Jim and Andy Stout, George Sopko, George Stafford(Outreach Director representing the NJ Highlands Coalition)

**Call to Order:** The meeting was called to order at 7:30 PM. The August and September minutes were approved.

**Visitor—George Stafford—**George works in conjunction with “Keep It Green” and the “League of Conservation.” He is advocating that when the renewal of the Open Space deal is considered by the new legislature that the Open Space deal become permanent and gets funded properly. NJ has lost a quarter million acres of open space while we have added many people to the state. There is concern about ground water recharge, so his organization wants a resolution to expand the program once it is reaffirmed. He requested that the Borough Council pass a resolution of support for sustainable open space, farmland, historic preservation, and stewardship funding for NJ. He will send a copy to George Sopko, and George will present it at the next Borough Council meeting.

Also, there is a Natural Resource Damages Constitutional Amendment on the Nov. 7, 2017 ballot to dedicate moneys from environmental contamination cases to natural resource restoration. The constitutional amendment will: repair, replace and restore damaged natural resources; preserve NJ’s natural resources; and pay the legal costs for environmental contamination claims. The Council will receive a copy of this, also, from George Stafford via George Sopko which is Question 2 on the ballot. Support for this amendment is encouraged.

**Tree Report:** The September and October Tree Report prepared by SONDY Epstein was sent separately. George will check on the status of the \$350.00 per tree fee to the tree bank and when that new fee will take effect. Regarding the question about a River Birch tree with three or four two inch trunks being considered acceptable as a tree replacement, it was agreed that the tree can be planted along with putting \$350.00 in the tree bank. That tree is not considered to be an acceptable substitute under the tree ordinance.

**Planning Board:** Karen reported that there has been no approval yet of the theatre proposed for part of the Sears property. The Mayor, police chief, and company reps are still meeting to try and resolve the concerns over issues involving crime and security. No resolution will be finalized until this issue is resolved.

The quarry has presented a very comprehensive tree plan for reforestation around the quarry. Weldon’s landscapers adjusted the reforest/buffer plan from what was originally proposed. The original reforest/buffer plan put various 10 foot berms along Bonnie Burn Road. These berms would destroy much of the current forest growth. It was determined that where forest growth was substantial, the forest would remain. Berms will be put in where forest growth is minimal, i.e. Colorado Café building and parking area. As the planting begins, additional changes from the plan may occur in order to leave as much of the original healthy trees/forest as possible. A tree inventory was done, and there will be more trees planted than removed. With the quarry being extended, the owners want to be good stewards and lower the noise levels and block the quarry view.

**Open Space:** No report

**Somerset Street:** No Report—SONDY gave to Jim information on the European Hop Hornbeam tree which she and Arleen received from Gus DeBasio, a town tree expert, at the 92<sup>nd</sup> annual conference of the NJ Shade Tree Federation at Cherry Hill on Oct. 19 and 20. Gus suggested planting this tree on Somerset St. Jim will be contacted by Phyllis Juetter to discuss this suggestion.

**Other(Old, New Business):** The vote on the Deer Hunt decision has been postponed until Nov. 2.

Sondy handed out a list of deer resistant plants written by Ray Miller. Karen will forward the Commission copies of this list.

Warren Green Fair 2018 will be held at WHRHS parking lot in Warren. Rachel and Joan had attended a follow-up meeting in which they made this suggestion, for this expanded area will provide easier access and a more user friendly flow of traffic among the many exhibits and programs offered. It is Watchung's turn to organize the affair.

Rachel located a place in Branchburg where styrofoam egg cartons(#6) like Eggland's can be recycled. It is at 201 Industrial Parkway. She also found an organization, Terra Cycle, that has partnered with Colgate and makes new products such as backpacks out of oral hygiene used products such as dental floss containers and empty toothpaste tubes. The Commission discussed places in town to put several bins which would be easily accessible to the general public for recycling these used items. Places suggested were the police station parking lot, Watchung Lake parking lot(might be too busy for easy access), the Texier parking lot, behind the municipal building or the Firemen's Exempt Hall. Two bins would be needed—one for the styrofoam egg cartons and the other for the oral care products. George will present this to the Council at the next meeting.

**Meetings, Correspondence, Permits:** no report

**Review of assignments for next meeting:** The next meeting is scheduled for Nov. 27, 2017 at 7:30 PM.

**Adjournment:** The meeting was adjourned at 9:52 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Jim and Andy Stout  
Acting Recording Secretaries